

Jesus Has Compassion

It is interesting to watch how animals show compassion. When a giraffe gives birth to a baby giraffe, immediately after the giraffe is born, the mother does something really interesting. As soon as it's born, the little giraffe struggles to stand up. And after the giraffe stands up, the mother sweeps her leg underneath the giraffe. The little giraffe falls down and tries to get up. It struggles with all its might and it gets up. And what happens? The mother trips the little giraffe again. This happens again and again until the little giraffe is able to move out of the way when its mother tries to trip it. As strange as it may sound, the mother was showing great compassion to her little giraffe. Because it wasn't enough for it to be able to stand. It had to be able to walk and even run, if they were attacked by lions.

Animals show compassion in unique ways. And as interesting as that is, it does not compare to our Savior. He is the one who shows true compassion. And we see that so very clearly in these words this morning. Mark tells us: *"Mark 1:40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'" Mark 1:41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured."*

Note in these words how Jesus shows compassion. First, we find this man with leprosy following Jesus. This Leper keeps following him. Again and again he falls to his knees, and Jesus keeps walking. And does that stop him? No, the leper keeps following him and crying out to him: "If you really *want* you can cleanse me." And how does Jesus respond? He just keeps walking.

How many of us can relate to that situation? How many of us can look back to times in our lives when we wanted, needed help from our Savior? We needed a response. We cried out to him in our prayers and what did we hear in response? We heard silence.

But, as we read these words, we learn that it isn't Jesus' coldness that keeps him from responding. It's his compassion. Jesus knows exactly what this leper needs. This leper needs to find a voice for his pain. He needs to pour out his pain, his loneliness and his sadness before the only one who can answer his prayer and take away his disease.

Finally, in verse 41, it says that Jesus is filled with compassion. And the word that Mark uses here helps us understand what this compassion looks like. It means to feel like your guts are being torn up from the inside out. And, if you've ever gone through stress, *real* stress, real anxiety, then you know what this feels like. When there is some horrible problem in your life and you have no ability to solve it on your own. And that pressure, anxiety and stress eats away at your stomach. That is what Jesus is feeling. He knows the pain and sadness in this man's life better than he does. He hates it that he has to ignore this man's cries and prayers. And finally, when the time is right, he turns around and acts.

And how he shows his compassion is wonderful. Mark tells us: *"Mark 1:41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man."* Did you catch that detail? There in that verse is an important detail. Before we jump ahead to Jesus healing the man, we need to focus on this one, important detail. Before Jesus healed him, he reached out and touched him. *That* is compassion. Think of this leper's life. At some point in his life, whether as a child or as an adult, his skin started to die on him, even while he was living. His family members saw that he had leprosy. And from that point on, he was alone. They might have brought him food or clothing. But, in every other part of his life he was alone. There was no one there to give him a hug. If he had a wife, he had to leave her. There was not brother or sister to hug him. There was no little child to wrap her arms around his legs. He was alone. And the lack of human contact was crushing him.

And so, Jesus was torn up on the inside because he knew this. He knew of this man's loneliness. And, he reached out and did what no one else would—what no one else could. He reached out and touched him. And with that one gesture he told him what words could not. He told him: "I was always here. You are not alone. I share your pain. I care for you. And I will heal your pain."

And that's exactly what he did. He healed him of this incurable illness. He took away his leprosy. And so, Jesus

does the same for us in our lives. For there are times when we cry out and it seems as if our prayers fall on deaf ears. There are times when we are alone. We might even have friends and family around us. But, for what we are going through, they cannot understand. They can only look at us from the outside and give shallow advice, like Job's friends. But Jesus sees our pain. And he shows compassion on us. Sometimes he shows compassion on us by being silent, even when it causes him pain to be silent. Other times he takes away our pain as we ask him. But, in every instance he is there, having compassion on us. He takes away our sin by being completely alone on the cross in our place. Because, after all, that is what hell is. Hell is being separated from God and all of his goodness. Jesus was separated from every good that exists in our place. And because of the loneliness that he endured, we now will never be alone. He takes away our sin. And for every pain in our life he is there to sympathize with us.

Jesus has compassion for our lives of pain. And in these words he shows a different sort of compassion. We read: *"Mark 1:43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere. "*

Jesus heals this man. But immediately after he heals him, he is very angry at him. He tells this leper who has been healed two things. First, he tells him to not say *anything* to *anyone*. Second, he commands this man to obey God's law and show himself to the priests. Instead, what happened? This man did not tell the priests. And he said *many* things to *many* people.

Jesus *knew* that this man wouldn't listen to him. He knew that he would trample on this amazing gift of healing that he had given to this leper. And, what did he do? He still healed him anyway. From this example we learn a powerful lesson about our Savior, Jesus. Jesus so very often throws his best gifts to people who trample them, forget about him, take advantage of him. And that is what it means to have compassion. Jesus died on the cross and took away the sins of everyone. That is amazing news! But that is also a great tragedy because most people reject that salvation. But, that's what it means to have compassion.

And even sadder still, it's not just unbelievers who act like this healed leper. Even we, God's children act the same. He forgives our sins. And what is our response? We might appreciate that fact for the moment. But, when the time comes, we give in to the same temptation again. Or we might realize and rejoice that Jesus has healed us from our sin. But, then after that, instead of living our lives *his* way, according to *his* word, we blithely and blindly forget about Jesus.

As we look at these words, one of the most important parts is unfinished. What happened to this healed leper? Did he use Jesus just to get healed and then forgot about him? Or, at some point, did he look back and see the great, amazing gift that Jesus had done for him and repent that he did not follow what Jesus said? What happened to this man? And God's word says nothing. It says nothing for a reason. It says nothing so that you will stop thinking about this man and think about yourself.

See the great amazing acts Jesus has done for you. See the absolute loneliness Jesus endured on the cross in your place. See the bond of friendship you now share with Jesus and with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Rejoice at the fact that you are never alone. Your brothers and sisters in Christ may not know all the pain you are going through. But they do not need to in order to pray for you. And even if there were no one to pray for you or to comfort you, Jesus is there to hear your prayers and feel your pain. Jesus is there to have compassion on you. Hold these facts in your minds then. And when he comforts you and takes away your pain, thank him. Thank him the way *he* would like to be thanked.

Jesus has compassion. He has compassion for our lives of pain. He has compassion in spite of our forgetfulness. Amen.